

Sports

# Bash's buzzer-beater lifts Kings to NBA 2K sweep

## NBA great Ewing hospitalized with COVID-19

LOS ANGELES: Rookie Matthew "Bash" Robles sank a buzzer-beating 3-pointer to seal Kings Guard Gaming's two-game sweep of Grizz Gaming in NBA 2K League action on Friday.

After winning the opener 82-68, the Kings trailed 53-40 heading to the fourth quarter of the second game, but they rallied to trail by one point with 1.1 seconds remaining. Yusuf "Yusuf\_Scarbz" Abdulla fired the inbounds pass to Bash at the top of the key, and Bash hit the decisive shot to give the Kings a 60-58 win.

In other matches as Week 3 concluded, Knicks Gaming spoiled Celtics Crossover Gaming's season debut, posting a 2-1 series win, and Wizards District Gaming dumped Hornets Venom GT 2-0.

The scheduled match between Heat Check Gaming and Jazz Gaming was postponed due to technical difficulties. No makeup date was announced. Originally due to begin its season March 24, the NBA 2K League postponed play because of the coronavirus pandemic. On April 27, the league announced an initial six-week, online-only schedule, with all 23 teams playing eight total matches from their home markets. Action finally began May 5.

Each match is a best-of-three, with the outcome of each three-game series counting as one win or one loss in the standings.

The Kings won their opener against the Grizz behind 20 points apiece from Bash and Waseem "Seemo" Talbert plus 15 points, 14 rebounds and eight assists from Connor "Dat Boy Sholtz" Rodrigues. Zach "Vandi" Vandivier paced the Grizz with 23 points and eight assists, and Dayvon "GOOFY757" Curry had 12 points and 12 boards.

Seemo produced a team-high 16 points as the

Kings closed the series with in dramatic fashion. Bash scored 15 points, and Dat Boy Sholtz grabbed 18 rebounds. Vandi put up 27 points, and GOOFY757 contributed 19 points and 18 rebounds.

The Knicks held off the Celtics 60-56 in the decisive third game, which was delayed late in the first quarter due to a technical issue. Christopher "Duck" Charles scored 31 points for the Knicks while Albano "oFAB" Thomallari registered 16 points and 10 assists for the Celtics.

Duck's 39 points powered the Knicks to a 69-43 victory over the Celtics in the series opener. oFAB scored 24 points in the defeat. The Celtics leveled the series with a 58-57 win, getting 29 points from oFAB and 15 from Tamer "Bulley" Mustafa. Malik "OriginalMalik" Hobson had 16 points and seven assists for the Knicks, who also got 10 points and 13 rebounds from Robert "CantGuardRob" Nastasi.

John "JBM" Mascone's 27 points and 14 assists guided the Wizards to a 75-69 win over the Hornets in their series opener. The Wizards' Ryan "Dayfri" Conger added 19 points and 14 rebounds. Justin "Snubby" Stemerman led the Hornets with 27 points, and teammate Alexander "Expose" Whelan had 23 points. The Wizards pulled out a 59-56 victory to complete the sweep, getting 19 points from JBM. Expose scored 18 points, and Xavier "Type" Vescovi had 12 points and 14 rebounds for the Hornets.

Meanwhile, NBA Hall of Famer Patrick Ewing, now the head basketball coach at Georgetown University, is in hospital with COVID-19. Ewing, 57, said on Twitter on Friday he had tested positive for the virus. "This virus is serious and should not be taken lightly," the New York Knicks icon said in a

lockdown restrictions. England players returned to individual skill-based training this week with the country hoping to begin their delayed summer of cricket with a test series against West Indies in July.

Pakistan are scheduled to tour England to play three tests in August followed by an equal number of Twenty20 Internationals, with the matches taking place behind closed doors as part of measures to combat COVID-19.

"Bowlers are at a particularly high risk of injury on return to play after a period of enforced time-out," the world governing body ICC said in its back-to-cricket guidelines released late on Friday.

The ICC advised teams to use larger squads and exercise caution over bowlers' workloads, saying test cricket would require a minimum of eight to 12



ORLANDO: File photo shows Darius Garland #10 of the Cleveland Cavaliers shoots the ball against the Orlando Magic on October 23, 2019 at Amway Center in Orlando, Florida. —AFP

statement. "I want to encourage everyone to stay safe and take care of yourselves and your loved ones."

"Now more than ever, I want to thank healthcare workers and everyone on the front lines. I'll be fine and we will all get through this," Georgetown's athletics department said in a statement that Ewing was "under care and isolated at a local hospital."

"He is the only member of the men's basketball program to have tested positive for the virus," the statement said. Ewing, who was a member of the 1992 Olympic gold medal-winning "Dream Team,"

and also won Olympic gold in 1984, played 17 seasons in the NBA, mostly for the Knicks, earning 11 All-Star selections.

The Knicks sent Ewing good wishes via Twitter saying "Get well soon, Big Fella. Stay strong". He was the first overall selection in the NBA draft after leading Georgetown to a national championship in 1985 and was Rookie of the Year in 1986.

After retiring from the NBA he turned to coaching and spent many seasons as an NBA assistant coach before taking over the head coaching job at his alma mater Georgetown. —Agencies

## Bowlers require two months' preparation to play Tests: ICC

MUMBAI: Bowlers looking at resuming test cricket after the novel coronavirus lockdown will require two to three months of preparation to avoid injuring themselves, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has said.

Cricket, like other global sports, has been suspended since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic but some countries are plotting guidelines for the return of the game as governments start easing

## Pochettino 'happy' that Mourinho replaced him

LONDON: Mauricio Pochettino insisted Friday that he was "happy" that Jose Mourinho replaced him as Tottenham coach. Mourinho took over in November despite Pochettino having enjoyed a successful five-and-a-half year spell in charge of the London side.

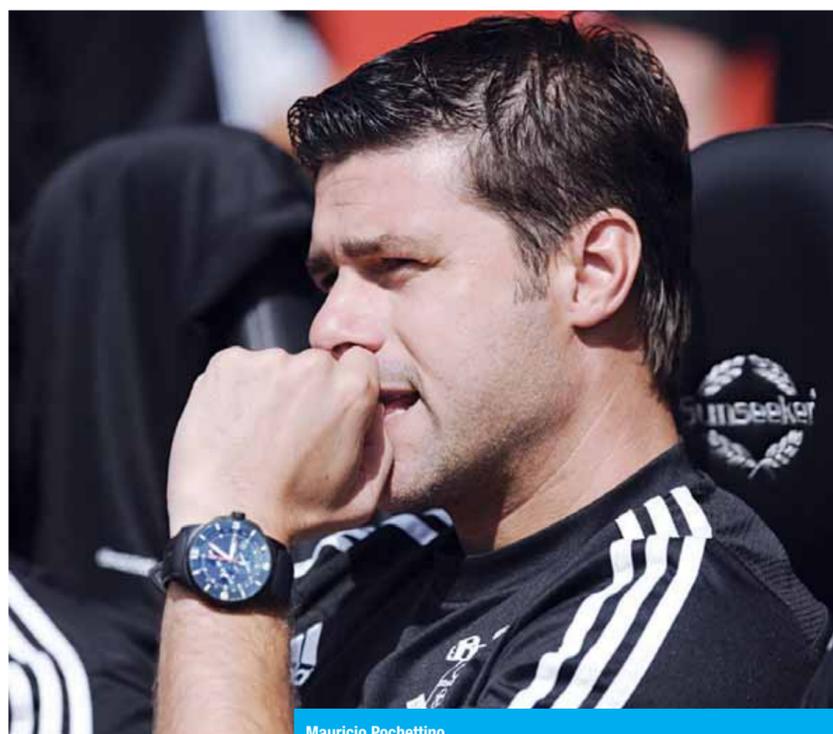
"I am so happy that he is at Tottenham, replacing me," admitted Pochettino who is now officially off the payroll at Spurs after his six-month gardening leave ended.

That leaves him free to take other jobs without the worry of prospective employers having to pay compensation. "And of course I am happy as well to leave the club in the way that we left it, with all the facilities that are the best in the world."

"For sure, he is very grateful for the way that we helped to build the club, which is now his club." Pochettino recalled how he and Mourinho had forged a close relationship during their days as rivals in Spain's La Liga.

"With Jose, we know each other for a long time," he explained. "When I was the coach of Espanyol, and he was at Real Madrid, we had a very good relationship. He's a top coach. And in life, look what happens. I always think I'd replace him."

"He was at Real Madrid. I say, 'Oh, maybe one day I can take your place at Real Madrid', and look at how life works out! He has taken my place at Tottenham. Unbelievable, eh?" —AFP



Mauricio Pochettino

## Premier League chief 'confident' of June restart

LONDON: Premier League chief executive Richard Masters is confident the top-flight season will resume in June as 'Project Restart' gathers pace. Clubs returned to socially distanced training in small groups this week and the league hope to begin playing the remaining 92 matches on June 12 or 19.

Premier League players and staff have been checked for the coronavirus, with six people testing positive

including Watford defender Adrian Mariappa.

"We've taken the first step. It's great for everybody, including the fans, to see our players back on the training ground," Masters told BBC Sport on Friday.

Masters said he was "as confident as we can be" that teams would be able to start in June. Asked if the Premier League had an exact date for a return, Masters said the organisation had to be "flexible".

While the top tier is taking baby steps towards emulating the Bundesliga's return to action, leagues in France, Scotland and the Netherlands have been abandoned because of the pandemic.

Masters said he recognised the

need for "contingency plans" and admitted "curtailment is still a possibility". Watford captain Troy Deeney and Chelsea midfielder N'Golo Kante have both opted against returning to training over health fears.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said phase two, the return of contact training in elite sports, could get government approval "later this week".

But Masters admitted the Premier League will not approve that step until it is safe. "We wouldn't have taken the first step to get back to training if we weren't convinced we had created a very safe environment for our players," he said.

"It is the first step and we have to be sure when we go to contact training we have completed those

processes. "We have done everything we possibly can to make return to training as safe as possible."

"We think it is safe to return. We have to respect players' decisions not to return to training. I would be comfortable to return to training." Matches will be played behind closed doors due to the virus, but Masters said the Premier League want games to be staged at clubs' normal stadiums rather than neutral venues, which was the original suggestion.

"We're talking to the authorities about that," he said. "I do believe we can appeal to fans not to congregate outside football grounds or go to other people's houses to watch football matches in contravention of government guidelines." —AFP

## Euro 2020 kicks off without footballers, but on console

PARIS: Euro 2020 may have been swept from the calendar due to coronavirus, but UEFA's video-game eTournament version kicks off today regardless. Instead of Kylian Mbappe, Harry Kane or Cristiano Ronaldo racing around the pitch, gamers will slug it out, contesting the first ever eEuro from their armchairs. "The weight of the whole thing is on our shoulders," said 21-year-old Frenchman Lotfi Derradji, who comes from the Paris suburbs but 'plays' for Monaco where he was crowned French champion in 2018.

"We will represent France not on the pitch but on the console, we're getting huge amounts of support," said Derradji's international and club teammate, Walid Rachid Tebane, who won the individual European title in June 2019. "We are disappointed that the Euros have been postponed but at the same time it switches more attention on to us," added Derradji, who has been playing with international French striker - and gaming enthusiast - Antoine Griezmann.

These two bespectacled eSports professionals earn 2,000-6,000 euros a month, but can boost that with the 40,000 euros up for grabs this weekend and its commercial tie-ins.

### ELECTRONIC VERSION

Using a Playstation console, the group matches are a single two-versus-two contest. Matches in the knockout stages will be best of three contests and a mixture of one-versus-one and two-versus-two. The final will be best of five.

"A Kylian Mbappe will always be more fluid to play with than a Mitroglou but in the game he isn't better than him," explains Derradji, referring to Kostas Mitroglou a Greek striker who is on Marseille's books.

"It will never replace real football though, let's not get carried away. It's not always easy to convince people about an event where the competitors are sat down." But the popularity of on-line games such as Fortnite and League of Legends with a young audience is seen by UEFA as a sign that the landscape is changing.

UEFA marketing director Guy-Laurent Epstein says the lockdown has been a boon for eSports. "The (games and emergence of gamers) represent an opportunity to be seized," he says. "We have seen an explosion of events over the past few months because it represents an alternative for sports fans," he told AFP.

"And some of them have attracted significant audiences." He added: "We hope for a minimum of four million viewers over the weekend." "We have seen that fans deprived of sports are tuning in to watch esports competitions even if they had never done that before." —AFP